Under Constraint

(No. 1411)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 28, 1878,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead." 2 Corinthians 5:14.

THE Apostle and his brethren were unselfish in all that they did. He could say of himself and of his brethren that when they varied their modes of action they always had the same objective in view—they lived only to promote the cause of Christ and to bless the souls of men. He says, "Whether we are beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we are sober, it is for your cause." Some may have said that Paul was too excitable and expressed himself too strongly. "Well," he said, "if it is so, it is to God." Others may have noticed the reasoning faculty to be exceedingly strong in Paul and may, perhaps, have thought him to be too coolly argumentative. "But," said Paul, "if we are sober, it is for your cause." Viewed from some points the Apostle and his co-laborers must have appeared to be raving fanatics, engaged upon a Quixotic enterprise and almost, if not quite, out of their minds.

One who had heard the Apostle tell the story of his conversion exclaimed, "Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning does make you mad," and no doubt many who saw the singular change in his conduct and knew what he had given up and what he endured for his new faith had come to the same conclusion. Paul would not be at all offended by this judgment, for he would remember that his Lord and Master had been charged with madness and that even our Lord's relatives had said, "He is beside Himself." To Festus he had replied, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."

And to Corinthian objectors he gave a still fuller reply. Blessed are they who are charged with being out of their mind through zeal for the cause of Jesus! They have a more than sufficient answer when they can say, "If we are beside ourselves, it is to God." It is no unusual thing for madmen to think others mad and no strange thing for a mad world to accuse the only morally sane among men of being fools and lunatics! But Wisdom is justified of her children. If others assailed the Apostle with another charge and insinuated that there was a method in his madness—that his being all things to all men showed an excess of prudence—and was no doubt a means to an end, which end it is possible they hinted at was a desire for power, he could reply most conclusively, "If we are sober, it is for your cause."

Paul had acted so unselfishly that he could appeal to the Corinthian Church and ask them to bear him witness that he sought not theirs but them. And that if he had judged their disorders with great sobriety it was for their cause. Whatever he did, or felt, or suffered, or spoke, he had but one design in it—the Glory of God in the perfecting of Believers and the

salvation of sinners. Every Christian minister ought to be able to use the Apostle's words without the slightest reserve. Yes, and every Christian should be able to say the same—"If I am excited, it is in defense of the Truth of God. If I am sober, it is for the maintenance of holiness. If I seem extravagant, it is because the name of Jesus stirs my inmost soul— and if I am moderate in spirit and thoughtful in mood—it is that I may in the wisest manner subserve the interests of my Redeemer's kingdom."

God grant that weeping or singing, anxious or hopeful, victorious or defeated, increasing or decreasing, elevated or depressed we may still follow our one design and devote ourselves to the holy cause! May we live to see Churches made up of people who are all set on one thing and may those Churches have ministers who are fit to lead such a people because they, also, are mastered by the same sacred purpose. May the fire which fell of old on Carmel fall on our altar, whereon lies the sacrifice, wetted a second and a third time from the salt sea of the world, until it shall consume the burnt sacrifice and the wood, the stones and the dust—and lick up the water that is in the trench. Then will all the people see it and fall upon their faces, and cry, "The Lord! He is God! The Lord, He is God!"

The Apostle now goes on to tell us why it was that the whole conduct of himself and his co-laborers tended to one end and objective. He says, "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then the all died." I give you here as exact a translation as I can. Two things I shall note in the text—first, under constraint. Secondly, under constraint which his understanding justified.

I. Our main point will come under the head, "UNDER CONSTRAINT. Here is the Apostle, a man who was born free, a man who beyond all others enjoyed the greatest spiritual liberty—glorying that he is under constraint! He was under constraint because a great force held him under its power. "The love of Christ constrains us." I suppose, "constrains us," is about the best rendering of the passage that could be given, but it might be translated, "restrains." The love of Christ restrains true Believers from self-seeking and forbids them to pursue any objective but the highest. Whether they were beside themselves or sober, the early saints yielded to Divine restraint, even as a good ship answers to her helm or as a horse obeys the rein.

They were not without a restraining force to prevent the slightest subjection to impure motives. The love of Christ controlled them and held them under its power. But the word, "restrained," only expresses a part of the sense, for it means that he was, "coerced or pressed," and so impelled forward as one carried along by pressure. All around him the love of Christ pressed upon him as the water in a river presses upon a swimmer and bears him onward with its stream. Bengel, who is a great authority, reads it, "Keeps us employed," for we are led to diligence, urged to zeal, maintained in perseverance and carried forward and onward by the love of Jesus Christ. The Apostles labored much, but all their labor sprang from the impulse of the love of Jesus Christ.

Just as Jacob toiled for Rachel solely out of love to her, so do true saints serve the Lord Jesus under the Omnipotent constraint of love. One eminent expositor reads the word, "constrains us," as though it signified that the Lord's servants were kept together and held as a band under a banner or standard. And he very appropriately refers to the words of the Church in the Song of Songs, "His banner over me was love." As soldiers are held together by rallying to the standard, so are the saints kept to the work and service of their Lord by the love of Christ which constrains them to endure all things for the elect's sake and for the Glory of God—and like an ensign—is lifted high as the center and loadstone of all their energies. In our Lord's love we have the best motive for loyalty, the best reason for energy and the best argument for perseverance!

The word may also signify, "compressed," and then it would mean that all their energies were pressed into one channel and made to move by the love of Christ. Can I put restraint and constraint, and all the rest, into one by grouping them in a figure? I think I can. When a flood is spread over an expanse of meadow land and stands in shallow pools, men restrain it by damming it up—and they constrain it to keep to one channel by banking it in! Thus compressed it becomes a stream and moves with force in one direction. See how it quickens its pace! See what strength it gathers! It turns yonder wheel of the mill, makes a sheep wash, leaps as a waterfall, runs laughing through a village as a brook where the cattle stand in the summer's sun. Growing all the while, it develops into a river, bearing boats and little ships! And this done, it still increases and stays not till it flows with mighty flood into the great sea.

The love of Christ had pressed Paul's energies into one force, turned them into one channel and then driven them forward with a wonderful force till he and his fellows had become a mighty power for good—always active and energetic. "The love of Christ," he says, "constrains us." All great lives have been under the constraint of some mastering principle. A man who is everything by turns and nothing long, is a nobody! A man who wastes life on whims and fancies, leisure and pleasures, never achieves anything! He flits over the surface of life and leaves no more trace upon his age than a bird upon the sky. But a man, even for mischief, becomes great when he becomes concentrated.

What made the young prince of Macedon, Alexander the Great, but the absorption of his whole mind in the desire for conquest? The man was never happy when he was at ease and in peace. His best days were spent on the battlefield or on the march. Let him rush to the front of the battle and make the common soldier grow into a hero by observing the desperate valor of his king—and then you see the greatness of the man! He could never have been the conqueror of the world if the insatiable greed of conquest had not constrained him. From this come your Caesars and your Napoleons— they are whole men in their ambition, subject to the lust of dominion.

When you carry this thought into a better and holier sphere, the same fact is clear. Howard could never have been the great philanthropist if he had not been strangely under the witchery of love to prisoners. He was more happy in a

hospital or in a prison than he would have been at Court or on the sofa of the drawing room. The man could not help visiting jails—he was a captive to his sympathy for men in bondage—and so he spent his life in seeking their good. Look at such a man as Whitfield or his associate, Wesley. Those men had but one thought and that was to win souls for Christ—their whole being ran into the one riverbed of zeal for God and made them full and strong as the rushing Rhone. It was their rest to labor for Christ! It was their honor to be pelted while preaching and to be maligned for the name of Jesus! A bishopric and a seat in the House of Lords would have been the death of them! Even a throne would have been a rack if they must have ceased hunting for souls.

The men were under the dominion of a passion which they could not withstand and did not wish to weaken. They could sing—

"The lo ve of Christ does me constrain To seek the wandering souls of men! With cries, entreaties, tears, to save, To snatch them from the fiery wave." Their whole life, being, thought, faculty, spirit, soul and body became one and indivisible in purpose. And their sanctified manhood was driven forward irresistibly so that they might be likened to thunderbolts flung from the eternal hand which must go forward till their end is reached. They could no more cease to preach than the sun could cease shining or reverse his course in the heavens!

This kind of constraint implies no compulsion and involves no bondage. It is the highest order of freedom, for when a man does exactly what he likes to do, if he wants to express the enthusiastic joy and delight with which he follows his pursuit, he generally uses language similar to that of my text. "Why," he says, "I am engrossed by my favorite study. It quite enthralls me. I cannot resist its charms, it holds me beneath its spell." Is the man any the less free? If a man gives himself up to a science, or to some other pursuit, though he is perfectly free to leave it whenever he likes, he will commonly declare that he cannot leave it—it has such a hold upon him that he addicts himself to it!

You must not think, therefore, that when we speak of being under constraint from the love of Christ we mean, by it, that we have ceased to exercise our wills, or to be voluntary agents in our service. Far from it! In fact, we acknowledge that we are never so free as when we are under bonds to Christ! No, our God does not constrain us by physical force. His cords are those of love and His bands are those of a man. The constraint is that which we are glad to feel—we give a full assent to its pressure—and therein lies its power. We rejoice to admit that, "The love of Christ constrains us!" We only wish the constraint would increase every day.

We have seen that Paul had a great force holding him—we advance a step further and note that the constraining force was the love of Christ. He does not speak of his love to Christ—that was a great power, too, though secondary to the first. But he is content to mention the greater, for it includes the less—"The love of Christ constrains us," that is, Christ's love to us is the master force! And O, Brothers and Sisters, this is a power to which it is joy to submit! This is a force worthy to command the greatest minds! "The love of Christ." Who shall measure this Omnipotent force? That love, according to our text, is strongest when seen in His dying for men. Mark the context, "because we thus judge, that if One died for all." The peculiar display of the love of Christ which had supreme sway over Paul was the love revealed in His substitutionary death!

Think of it a moment. Christ the Ever-Blessed, to whom no pain, nor suffering, nor shame could come, loved men! O singularity of love! He loves guilty men, yes, loves His enemies! Loving poor fallen men, He took their nature and became a Man. Marvelous condescension! The Son of God is also Son of Mary and, being found in fashion as a Man, He humbles Himself and is made of no reputation. See Him taken before human judges and unjustly condemned! Seized by Roman lictors and lashed with the scourge! Gazing a little longer, you see Him nailed to a cross, hung up for a felon, left amid jeer and jibe and cruel glance and malicious speech to bleed away His life till He is actually dead and laid in the grave!

At the back of all this there is the mystery that He was not only dying, but dying in the place of others, bearing almighty wrath, enduring that dread sentence of death which is attached to human sin. Herein is love, indeed, that the infinitely Pure should suffer for the sinful, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! Love did never climb to so sublime a height as when it brought Jesus to the bloody tree to bear the dread sentence of inexorable Law! Think of this love, Beloved, till you feel its constraining influence!

It was love eternal, for long before the earth was fashioned, the eternal Word had set His eyes upon His people and their names were engraved on His heart. It was love unselfish, for He had nothing to gain from His redeemed—there were harps enough in Heaven and songs enough in the celestial city without their music! It was love most free and spontaneous, for no man sought it or so much as dreamed of it! It was love most persevering, for when man was born into the world and sinned and rejected Christ—and He came to His own and His own received Him not—He loved them still, loved them even to the end. It was love—what shall I say of it? If I were to multiply words I might rather sink your thoughts than raise them!

It was love infinite, immeasurable, inconceivable! It surpasses the love of women, though the love of mothers is strong as death and jealousy is cruel as the grave. It passes the love of martyrs, though that love has triumphed over the fury of the flame. All other lights of love pale in their ineffectual brightness before this blazing sun of love, whose warmth a man may

feel but upon whose utmost light no eye can gaze! He loved us like a God! It was nothing less than God's own love which burned within that breast which was bared to the spear that it might redeem us from going down into the Pit! It is this force, then, which has taken possession of the Christian's mind and, as Paul says, "constrains us."

Now we may advance another step and say that the love of Christ operates upon us by begetting in us love to Him. Brothers and Sisters, I know you love our Lord Jesus Christ, for all His people love Him. "We love Him because He first loved us." But what shall I say? There are scarcely any themes upon which I feel less able to speak than these two—the love of Christ to us and our love to Him—because somehow love needs a tongue elsewhere than this which dwells in the mouth. This tongue is in the head and it can therefore tell out our thoughts—but we need a tongue in the heart to tell out our emotions which have now to borrow utterance from the brain's defective orator.

There is a long space between the cool brain and the blazing heart—and matters cool on the road to the tongue, so that the burning heart grows weary of chill words. But oh, we love Jesus! Brothers and Sisters, we truly love Him! His name is sweet as the honeycomb and His Word is precious as the gold of Ophir. His Person is very dear to us—from His head to His feet He is altogether lovely. When we get near Him and see Him at the last, I think we shall swoon away with excess of joy at the sight of Him and I, for one, ask no Heaven beyond a sight of Him and a sense of His love! I do not doubt that we shall enjoy all the harmonies, all the honors and all the fellowships of Heaven, but if they were all blotted out, I do not know that they would make any considerable difference to us if we may but see our Lord upon His throne, and have His own prayer fulfilled, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory." He is happiness to us, yes, He is All in All!

Do you not feel that the sweetest sermons you ever hear are those which are fullest of Him? When I can sometimes hear a sermon, it sickens me to listen to fine attempts to philosophize away the Gospel, or to pretty essays which are best described as a jingle of elegant words. But I can hear with rapture the most illiterate and blundering Brother if his heart burns within him and he heartily speaks of my Lord, the Well-Beloved of my soul! We are glad to be in the place of assembly when Jesus is within, for whether on Tabor with two or three, or in the congregation of the faithful—when Jesus is present it is good to be there.

This joyful feeling, when you hear about Jesus, shows that you love Him and your endeavors to spread the Gospel show that you love His cause. The love of Christ to you has moved you to desire the coming of His kingdom and you feel that you could give your life to extend the borders of His dominions! He is a glorious King and all the world should know it! Oh that we could see all the nations bowing before His scepter of peace! We love Him so much that till the whole earth smiles in the light of His throne, we can never rest. As to His

Truth, a very great part of our love to Christ will show itself by attachment to the pure Gospel. I have not much patience with a certain class of Christians, nowadays, who will hear anybody preach so long as they can say, "He is very clever, a fine preacher, a man of genius, a born orator."

Is cleverness to make false doctrine palatable? Why, Sirs, to me the ability of a man who preaches error is my sorrow rather than my admiration! I cannot endure false doctrine, however neatly it may be put before me. Would you have me eat poisoned meat because the dish is of the choicest ware? It makes me indignant when I hear another gospel put before the people with enticing words by men who would gladly make merchandise of souls! And I marvel at those who have soft words for such deceivers.

"That is your bigotry," says one. Call it so if you like, but it is the bigotry of the loving John who wrote—"If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that

bids him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." I would to God we had all more of such decision, for the lack of it is depriving our religious life of its backbone and substituting for honest manliness a mass of the tremulous jelly of mutual flattery. He who does not hate the false does not love the true! And he to whom it is all the same whether it is God's Word or man's, is himself unrenewed at heart! Oh, if some of you were like your fathers, you would not have tolerated in this age the wagon loads of trash under which the Gospel has been of late buried by ministers of your own choosing! You would have hurled out of your pulpits the men who are enemies to the fundamental doctrines of your Churches and yet are crafty enough to become your pastors and undermine the faith of a fickle and superficial generation! These men steal the pulpits of once orthodox Churches because otherwise they would have none at all!

Their powerless theology cannot, of itself, arouse sufficient enthusiasm to enable them to build a mousetrap at the expense of their admirers and, therefore, they profane the houses which your fathers have built for the preaching of the Gospel and turn aside the organizations of once orthodox communities to help their infidelity! I call it by that name in plain English, for "modern thought" is not one whit better—and of the two evils I give infidelity the palm, for it is less deceptive. I beg the Lord to give back to the Churches such a love to His Truth that they may discern the spirits and cast out those which are not of God.

I feel sometimes like John, of whom it is said that though the most loving of all spirits, yet he was the most decided of all men for the Truth of God. Once when he went to the bath and found that the heretic, Cerinthus, was there, he hurried out of the building and would not tarry in the same place with him! There are some with whom we should have no fellowship! No, not so much as to eat bread! And though this conduct looks stern and hard, it is after the mind of Christ, for the Apostle spoke by Inspiration when he said, "If we, or an angel from Heaven preach to you any other Gospel than that which you have received, let

him be accursed." According to modern efficiency he ought to have said, "Let him be kindly spoken with in private, but pray make no stir! No doubt the thought was original and we must not question his liberty. Doubtless, he believes the same as we do, only there is some little difference as to terms."

This is treason to Christ, treachery to the Truth of God and cruelty to souls! If we love our Lord we shall keep His Words and stand fast in the faith, coming out from among the false teachers! Nor is this inconsistent with charity, for the truest love to those who err is not to fraternize with them in their error, but to be faithful to Jesus in all things! The love of Jesus Christ creates in men a deep attachment to the Gospel, especially to the doctrines which cluster around the Person of our Lord. And I think more especially to that doctrine which is the cornerstone of all, namely, that Christ died in the place of men. He who touches the doctrine of Substitution, touches the apple of our eye! He who denies it, robs our soul of her only hope, for there we gather all our consolation for the present and our expectation for days to come. A great force, then, held the Apostle—that force was the love of Christ—and it worked in Him love to Christ in return!

Now, this force acts proportionately in Believers. It acts in every Christian more or less, but it differs in degree. We are all of us, alive, but the vigor of life differs greatly in the consumptive and the athletic—and so the love of Jesus acts upon all regenerate men, but not to the same extent. When a man is perfectly swayed by the love of Christ, he will be a perfect Christian. When a man is growingly under its influence, he is a growing Christian. When a man is sincerely affected by the love of Christ, he is a sincere Christian. But he in whom the love of Christ has no power whatever is not a Christian at all. "I thought," says one, "that believing was the main point." True, but faith works by love and if your faith does not work by love it is not the faith which will save the soul.

Love never fails to bloom where faith has taken root. Beloved, you will feel the power of the love of Christ in your soul in proportion to the following points. In proportion as you know it. Study, then, the love of Christ—search deep and learn its secrets. Angels desire to look into it. Observe its eternity—without beginning. Its immutability—without change. Its infinity—without measure. Its eternity—without end. Think much of the love of Christ, till you comprehend with all saints what are its breadths and lengths. And as you know it, you will begin to feel its power. Its power will also be in proportion to your sense of it. Do you feel the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit? Knowing is well, but enjoyment as the result of believing is better! Does it not sometimes force the tears from your eyes to think that Jesus loved you and gave Himself for you?

On the other hand, does it not at times make you feel as if, like David, you could dance before the ark of the Lord, to think that the love of God should ever have been set on you—that Christ should die for you? Ah, think and think again—for you the bloody sweat, for you the crown of thorns, for you the nails, the spear, the wounds, the broken

heart—all, all for love of you who were His enemy! In proportion as your heart is tender and is sensitive to this love, it will become a constraining influence in your whole life. The force of this influence will also depend very much upon the Divine Grace which dwells within you. You may measure your Grace by the power which the love of Christ has over you. Those who dwell near their Lord are so conscious of His power over them that the very glances of His eyes fill them with holy ardor. If you have much Grace you will be greatly moved by the love which gave you that Grace and made you wondrously sensitive to it. But he who has little Grace, as is the case with not a few, can read the story of the Cross without emotion, and can contemplate Jesus' death without feeling. God deliver us from a cold and hard marble heart!

Character also has much to do with the measure in which we feel the constraint of Jesus' love. The more Christ-like the more Christ-constrained. You must become, dear Brothers and Sisters, by prayer through the Holy Spirit, to be like Jesus Christ. And when you do, His love will take fuller possession of you than it does at this moment and you will be more manifestly under its constraining power. Our last point upon this head is that wherever its energy is felt it will operate after its kind. Forces work according to their nature—the force of love creates love—and the love of Christ begets a kindred love. He who feels Christ's love acts as Christ acted. If you really feel the love of Christ in making a sacrifice of Himself you will make a sacrifice of yourself. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

We shall, for our Lord's sake, count all things but dross for the excellency of His knowledge. O Soul, you will have no choice left after you have once known and chosen your Lord! If that road leads to wealth, but if it does not glorify Christ, you will at once say, "Farewell wealth." That road leads to honor—you will be famous if you will take that path. But if it will bring no glory to Christ, if you feel the power of His love in your soul, you will say, "Farewell honor! I will embrace shame for Christ, for my one thought is to sacrifice myself for Him who sacrificed Himself for me." If the love of Christ constrains you, it will make you love others, for His was love to others, love to those who could do Him no service, who deserved nothing at His hands. If the love of Christ constrains you, you will specially love those who have no apparent claim upon you and cannot justly expect anything from you, but on the contrary deserve your censure. You will say, "I love them because the love of Christ constrains me."

Dirty little creatures in the gutter. Filthy women polluting the streets. Base men who come out of jail merely to repeat their crimes—these are the fallen humanities whom we learn to love when the love of Christ constrains us! I do not know how else we could care for some poor creatures, if it were not that Jesus teaches us to despise none and despair of none. Those ungrateful creatures, those malicious creatures, those abominably blasphemous and profane creatures whom you sometimes meet with and shrink from—you are to love

them because Christ loved the very chief of sinners! His love to you must be reflected in your love to the lowest and vilest. He is your Sun—be you as the moon to the world's night.

The love of Jesus Christ was a practical love. He did not love in thought, only, and in word, but in deed and in truth—and if the love of Christ constrains us—we shall throw our souls into the work and service of love. We shall be really at work for men, giving alms of our substance, enduring our measure of suffering and making it clear that our Christianity is not mere talk, but downright work! We shall be like the bullock of the burnt offering, laid upon the altar to be wholly consumed. We shall consider nothing but how we can most completely be eaten up with the zeal of God's House, how without the reserve of one single faculty we may be entirely consumed in the service of our Lord and Master. May the Lord bring us to this!

II. THE CONSTRAINT OF WHICH WE HAVE SPOKEN WAS JUSTIFIED BY THE APOSTLE'S

UNDERSTANDING. "The love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge." Love is blind. A man may say that in the affairs of love he exercises a calm discretion, but I take leave to doubt it. In love to Christ, however, you may be carried right away and be as blind as you like and yet you shall act according to the most sound judgment. The Apostle says warmly, "The love of Christ constrains us," and yet he adds with all coolness, "because we thus judge." When understanding is the basis of affection, then a man's heart is fixed and his conduct becomes in a high degree exemplary. So it is here.

There is a firm basis of judgment—the man has weighed and judged the matter as much as if the heart were out of the question—but the logical conclusion is one of all-absorbing emotion and mastering affection as much as if the understanding had been left out of the question. His judgment was as the bronze altar, cold and hard, but on it he laid the coals of burning affection, vehement enough in their flame to consume everything. So it ought to be with us. Religion

should be with a man a matter of intellect as well as of affection—and his understanding should always be able to justify the strongest possible passion of his soul, as the Apostle says it did in the case of himself and his brethren.

They had reasons for all that they did. For, first, he recognized Substitution—"We thus judge, that if One died for all." O Brothers and Sisters, this is the very sinew of Christian effort—Christ died in the sinner's place! Christ is the Surety, the Sacrifice, the Substitute for men! If you take the doctrine of vicarious Sacrifice out of the Christian religion I protest that nothing is left worth calling a revelation! It is the heart, the head, the soul, the essence of our holy faith— that the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all and with His stripes we are healed! The Apostle firmly believed this to be a matter of fact and then, out of his belief, there grew an intense love to Jesus, as well there might. Did Jesus stand in my place?

Oh, how I love Him! Did He die for me? Then His love has mastered me and will always hold me as its willing captive! O sacred Substitute, I am Yours and all that I have!

In the next place, he recognized union to Christ, for, he said, "If One died for all, then the all died," for so it runs, that is to say, the all for whom Christ died, died in His death. His dying in their place was their dying! He dies for them, they die in Him. He rises, they rise in Him. He lives, they live in Him. Now if it is really so, that you and I who have believed in Christ are one with Christ and members of His body, that Truth of God may be stated coolly, but like the flint, it conceals a fire within it! For if we died in Jesus, we are dead to the world, to self—to everything but our Lord! O Holy Spirit, work in us this death even to the fullest! The Apostle recognizes the natural consequence of union with the dying Lord and resolves to carry it out.

Brothers and Sisters, when Adam sinned, we sinned. And we have felt the result of that fact—we were constituted sinners by the act of our first representative and every day we see it to be so. Every little child that is carried to the grave bears witness that death passes upon all men, for that all have sinned in Adam, even though they have not personally sinned after the similitude of his transgression. Now, just as our sin in Adam effectively operates upon us for evil, so must our death with Christ effectively operate upon our lives for good. It ought to do so. How can I live for myself? I died more than 18 centuries ago! I died and was buried! How can I live to the world? Eighteen hundred years ago and more the world hung me up as a malefactor—yes, and in my heart of hearts I have also crucified the world—and regard it as a dead malefactor. How shall I fall in love with a crucified world, or follow after its delights? We thus died with Christ.

"Now," says the Apostle, "the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then the all died." All who were in Christ, for whom He died, died when He died. And what follows from it but that they should not live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again? We are one with Christ and what He did for us we did in Him and, therefore, we are dead because He died! Therefore we ought no longer to live in the old selfish way, but should live only to the Lord. This is the basis upon which the intellect rests and then the affections yield themselves to the sacred force of Jesus' dying love.

I close with the following reflections, putting them very briefly. The first reflection is—how different is the inference of the Apostle from that of many professors. They say, "If Christ died once for all and so finished the work of my salvation, then I am saved and may sit down in comfort and enjoy myself, for there is no need for effort or thought." Ah, what a mercy to feel that you are saved and then to go to sleep in the corner of your pew! A converted man and, therefore, curled up upon the bed of sloth! A pretty sight, surely, but a very common one! Such people have but little or no feeling for others who remain unconverted. "The Lord will save His own," they say and they little care whether He does so or not. They

appear to be dreadfully afraid of doing God's work, though there is not the slightest need for such a fear, since they will not even do their own work!

These are presumptuous persons, strangers to the Grace of God, who know not that the main part of salvation lies in our being saved from selfishness and hardness of heart! It is the devil's inference that because Christ did so much for me I am now to do nothing for Him! I must even beg the devil's pardon, for I scarcely think that even he is base enough to draw such an inference from the Grace of God. Assuredly he has never been in a position to attempt so detestable a crime. It is to the last degree unutterably contemptible that a man who is indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ for so much should then make the only consequence of his indebtedness to be a selfish indolence! Never will a true child of God say, "Soul, take your ease. You are all right—nothing else matters!"

Oh no! "The love of Christ constrains us." How much more ennobling, again, is such conduct as that of the Apostle than that of many professed Christians? I am not about to judge anyone, but I would beg you to judge yourselves. There

are some and I would try to hope that they may be Christians—the Lord knows them that are His—who give to the cause of God, who serve God, after a fashion. But still, the main thought of their life is not Christ nor His service, but the gaining of wealth! That is their chief objective and towards it all their faculties are bent. There are other Church members—God forbid we should judge them—whose great thought is success in their profession. I am not condemning their having such a thought, but the chief ambition of the Apostle and of those like he was not this, but something higher! The chief aim of all of us should be nothing of self, but serving Christ! We are to be dead to everything but our Lord's Glory, living with this mark before us—this prize to be strained after—that Christ shall be glorified in our mortal bodies!

In our business, in our studies, in everything, our slogan must be, Christ, Christ, Christ! Is it not a far more noble thing for a man to have lived wholly unto Christ than for mammon, or honor, or for himself in any shape or form? I speak as to wise men—judge what I say! Do you not think, also, that such a pursuit as this is much more peace-giving to the spirit? People will judge our conduct and they are sure to judge as severely as they can. If they see us zealous and self-denying they will say of us, "Why, the man is beside himself." This will not matter much to us if we can reply, "It is for God." Or if they say, "Oh, you old sober sides, how grave you are," we shall not be offended if we can reply, "Ah, but it is for the good of others that I am sober."

You will be very little distressed by sharp criticisms if you know that your motive is wholly unselfish. If you live for Christ and for Christ, alone, all the carping of men or devils will never cast you down. Do you not think that a life spent for Jesus only is far more worth looking back upon at the last than any other? If you call yourselves Christians, how will you judge a life spent in making money? It cannot be very much longer before you must gather

up your feet in the bed and resign your soul to God. Now, suppose yourself sitting in your chamber all alone, making out the final balance-sheet of your stewardship—how will it look if you have to confess, "I have been a Christian professor. My conduct has been outwardly decent and respectable, but my chief purpose was not my Master's Glory. I have lived with the view of scraping together so many thousands and I have done it."

Would you like to fall asleep and die with that as the consummation of your life? Or shall it be, "I have lived to hold up my head in society and pay my way and leave a little for my family"? Will that satisfy you as your last reflection? Brothers and Sisters, we are not saved by our works, but I am speaking, now, upon the consolation which a man can derive from looking back upon his life. Suppose he shall have felt the power of my text and shall be able to say, "I have been enabled, by the Grace of God, to which I give all the glory, to consecrate my entire being to the entire glorification of my Lord and Master. And whatever my mistakes, and they are many—and my wanderings and failures, and they are countless—yet the love of Christ has constrained me, for I judged myself to have died in Him, and I have lived to Him. I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith"?

Why, I think it were worth while so to die! To be constrained by the love of Christ creates an heroic life, exalted, illustrious—no, I must come down from such lofty words—it is such a life as every Christian ought to live! It is such a life as every Christian must live if he is really constrained by the love of Christ, for the text does not say the love of Christ ought to constrain us—it declares that it does constrain us. Brothers and Sisters, if it does not constrain you, judge yourselves that you be not judged and found wanting at the last! God grant we may feel the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Amen.